

Abstract of the Invention

An asymmetrical data communications system (ADCS) provides point-to-multipoint television programming including conventional television programming, near video-on-demand (NVOD) or video-on-demand (VoD), and the full variety of available programming, via a compressed, digitized UHF transmission. A program subsystem of the ADCS receives programming from content providers and processes the received signals for channel and VoD or NVOD service, then sends the aggregated signal to a transmission subsystem that modulates, channelizes, amplifies, filters and broadcasts the digital UHF signals over the air. Subscribing viewers are equipped with an intelligent control box (ICB) suitably configured to receive, demodulate, and decode the digital UHF broadcast and to transmit the resulting signal to one or more display or other terminal devices. The ICB further provides a matrix switch or gateway for receiving signals over any available transmission path. In addition to the ICBs of the subscribing viewers, a return path subsystem of the ADCS system includes a session control and administrative facility to which the ICBs are linked via the public switched telephone network or suitable wireless alternative so that transaction and viewing data can be received from the subscribing viewers. The return path subsystem, in turn, is linked to the program subsystem in order to route to that subsystem any information necessary or useful for providing programming.